



MASSACHUSETTS  
Department of  
Higher Education

September 22, 2014

Dear Colleagues:

Massachusetts has embarked on an exciting journey – the development of a comprehensive birth through grade 3 policy agenda – that will result in the implementation of innovative and bold strategies; increased alignment and collaboration across the early education, K-12, and higher education sectors; and most importantly, the provision of enhanced services to children and families across the state.

In early May, we issued the first draft of the attached document, entitled *Building the Foundation for College and Career Success from Birth through Grade 3*. Based on the valuable feedback that we have received over the past several months, we are pleased to share this revised document.

This document is serving as the foundation of the comprehensive birth through grade 3 agenda, and it presents essential competencies that should be demonstrated by all children and the essential experiences that will lead to the development of these competencies. This document is also aligned with the [Massachusetts Definition of College and Career Readiness](#), which was adopted by the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education and the Board of Higher Education during the spring of 2013, it reinforces the importance of preparing our children for lifelong success *starting at birth*, and it reflects the unique developmental experiences of children from birth through grade 3.

**We would greatly appreciate your feedback about this revised document, and there are two ways in which you can share your thoughts. First, you can send an e-mail message to Saeyun Lee ([saeyun.lee@bhe.mass.edu](mailto:saeyun.lee@bhe.mass.edu)) at the Department of Higher Education (please include the name of the document in the title of your message). And second, you can respond to our [online survey](#) by October 10, 2014.**

We will post the final version of this document on the Commonwealth's new birth through grade 3 website, [Building the Foundation for College and Career Success for Children from Birth through Grade 3](#), during the fall of 2014. If you have any questions or need additional information, please contact Saeyun Lee.

Thank you in advance for your feedback and contributions to this exciting work!

Sincerely yours,

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Betsy Edes, Department of Early Education and Care  
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## BUILDING THE FOUNDATION FOR COLLEGE AND CAREER SUCCESS FOR CHILDREN FROM BIRTH THROUGH GRADE 3

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### Overview

All infants, toddlers, and children in Massachusetts – with the support of parents, family members, educators, and community members – will develop the knowledge, skills, and dispositions that are necessary for college, career, and lifelong success.

The Commonwealth has identified essential competencies across the cognitive, social and emotional, linguistic, and physical domains that should be demonstrated by our youngest citizens from birth through grade 3 in order to ensure that they are on the pathway to future success. In order to build a strong foundation for learning and growth, all children must have enriching and stimulating experiences starting at birth; as such, the Commonwealth has also identified essential experiences that will lead to the development of these competencies.

In 2013, our Board of Elementary and Secondary Education and our Board of Higher Education adopted the [Massachusetts Definition of College and Career Readiness](#), which identified for the first time in the Commonwealth's history the academic knowledge, workforce readiness skills, and essential qualities that students need to demonstrate to successfully complete entry-level, credit-bearing college courses, participate in certificate or workplace training programs, and enter economically viable career pathways.

***The essential competencies that are presented in this document are the precursors for the knowledge, skills, and qualities that were identified in the 2013 Definition of College and Career Readiness.***

Given the critical importance of the early years of a child's life, the Commonwealth will implement new and innovative birth through grade 3 strategies that reflect a growing body of research about early childhood development and also increase alignment between the early education and K-12 sectors. In addition, the Commonwealth's education, social services, and other agencies will work in partnership with educators, parents and family members, community members, and other key stakeholders to create healthy, dynamic, and positive environments within which our youngest citizens can thrive.

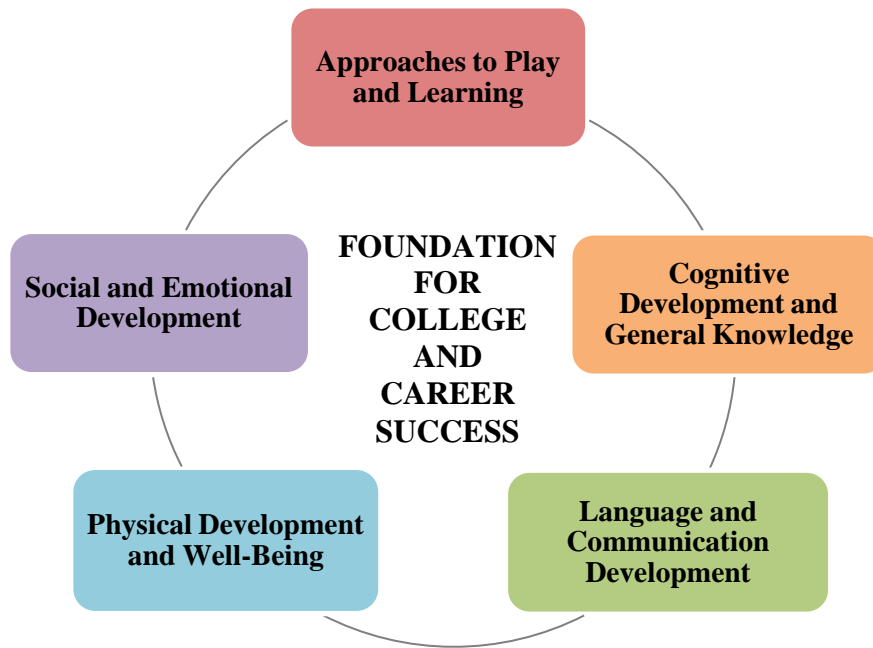
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### Learning and Growth Across Multiple Domains

Building a strong foundation for learning and growth requires equal emphasis on all of the domains of early childhood development, acknowledgment of how these domains are interrelated, and recognition of individual abilities, strengths, cultural and linguistic backgrounds, and needs. Children from birth

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through grade 3 who are on the path to college, career, and lifelong success will build competencies in five areas.



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## Foundational Experiences and Essential Competencies

All children from birth through grade 3 are active participants in their own learning. Parents, family members, educators, and community members will cultivate and nurture the development of these competencies and will promote children's construction of knowledge in a developmentally appropriate manner and sequence. Continuous access to emotionally and physically safe, culturally and linguistically inclusive, and high-quality learning and play experiences in homes, educational settings, and communities, will lead to the development of these competencies.

- **Approaches Toward Play and Learning**

All children from birth through grade 3 will develop curiosity about the world around them and excitement about exploration and learning; increase confidence about their ability to gain knowledge and skills; and build the ability to be proactive, independent, and collaborative learners.

*Essential experiences provide opportunities for discovery, problem solving, and the acquisition of knowledge through interesting and interactive activities; promote creativity, cooperativeness, and persistence; and support individualized growth, learning, and multiple pathways to success.*

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- **Cognitive Development and General Knowledge**

All children from birth through grade 3 will interact with adults and peers, objects, and materials in their environment and learn how to think and reason. They will develop curiosity and knowledge about the world around them, learn to recognize that they are active contributors to their environment, and continually enhance their ability to acquire and utilize multisensory knowledge and skills.

*Essential experiences promote the active exploration of both physical and social environments; provide opportunities to explore linguistic, artistic and mathematical concepts, including the quantification, classification, and categorization of objects; and promote the exploration of numbers, letters, words, sounds, and stories.*

- **Language and Communication Development**

All children from birth through grade 3 will learn how to use sounds, gestures, and language to effectively and creatively express emotions, thoughts, and needs; interact and exchange information with adults, peers, and other individuals; develop knowledge and ideas; and build the skills necessary for reading and writing proficiency (in multiple languages as applicable).

*Essential experiences promote the creation of language- and literacy-rich environments – those that celebrate cultural and linguistic diversity – in the home and community, and these experiences also provide continuous opportunities for expanding vocabulary; engaging in active conversation and storytelling; developing listening skills; and building the skills needed to read, write, and respond to / ask questions in multiple media.*

- **Physical Development and Well-Being**

All children from birth through grade 3 will have access to primary preventive health care and mental health care, and opportunities in their home and learning environments that will enable them to achieve physical developmental milestones as well as gain gross, fine, sensorimotor, and oral motor skills.

*Essential experiences promote physical safety; include indoor and outdoor movement and fitness activities; and provide opportunities to develop healthy eating, nutrition, and exercise habits.*

- **Social and Emotional Development**

All children from birth through grade 3 will develop and maintain trusting, healthy, and positive interactions and relationships with both adults and peers; develop a positive sense of self and self-efficacy; express a healthy range of emotions in socially and culturally appropriate ways; understand the role of social interactions; and develop the skills needed to regulate attention, impulses, and behavior.

*Essential experiences provide emotional stability, security, and mental well-being; promote the development of self-regulation and executive functioning skills; increase social awareness;*

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*create positive and enriching opportunities for social exploration, growth, and learning with both peers and adults; and promote the development of collaborative and positive relationships between early educators and families.*

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All children who demonstrate the identified competencies from birth to grade 3 will have the foundational knowledge, skills, and qualities necessary for continuous academic growth and success. By ensuring that all of our youngest citizens are on the pathway to college, career, and lifelong success, we will ensure the intellectual, civic, and economic prosperity of the Commonwealth.